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The Voice of the Valley

Yone Noguchi

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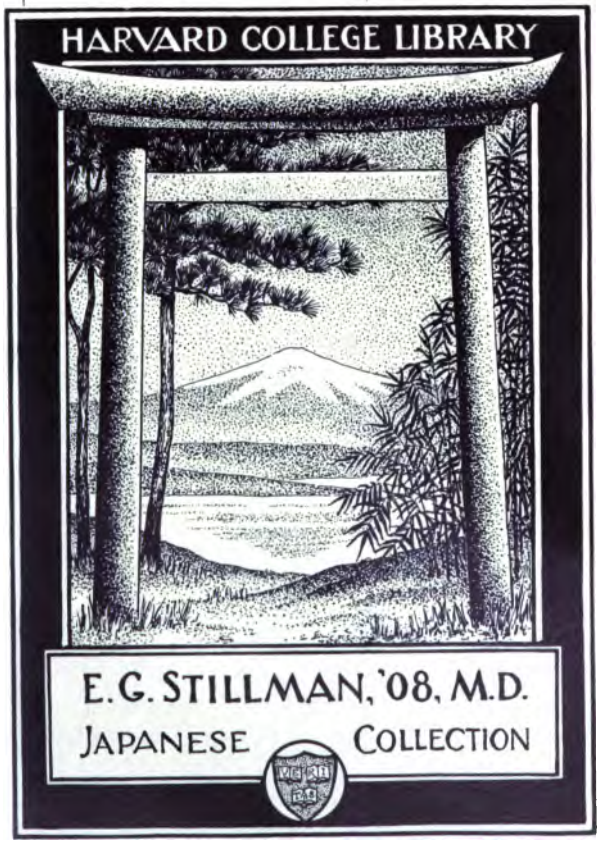

E. J. Stillman
1936

The Voice of the Valley

The Voice of the Valley

By

Yone Noguchi

CANCELLED
B. M.

Author of "Seen and Unseen"

Introduction by Chas. Warren Stoddard

Illustration by William Keith

William Doxey
At the Sign of the Lark
San Francisco

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To

NELLY E. W. SMITH

Pray, thou who art the first to touch the heart to these lines, be the last to read alone, and bless me when the world has forgotten me!

25169

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Introduction

EVER since my first visit to the Yosemite Valley, nearly thirty years ago, I have believed that no verbal description can give the reader an adequate idea of its marvelous and manifold features; that the ordinary forms of verse cannot compass it; that at most the poet can only suggest; and that, after all, the mere suggestion is sufficient—the imagination supplying what is lacking in form, color, and detail. But the suggestion must be offered by one singularly gifted, and possessed of a temperament as picturesque, as variable, as unique as the Valley itself.

He must also be a word-builder, if he would conjure the echoes from that valley of the shadow, where heaven and earth meet, where there is no horizon save the dim-rack and the storm.

When I heard that Yone Noguchi was in the Yosemite with his exiled muse, it seemed to me that this unconventional child of nature, this boy whose heart and soul lie naked and bare, must strike a chord that all the voices of nature shall respond to—and for these reasons:—

Noguchi is a word-builder of startling originality and power; inspired by the charming audacity of innocence, he is unfaltering in his flights; the sensuous imagination of the Oriental has lost nothing of its fire and splendor, though the new medium of expression is the most literal English that ever was uttered: his lines are charged with primitive eloquence;

his is the spontaneous song of a heart that is overflowing with melody—of a soul that would set all the world to music. There are passages in his poems as lofty and abrupt as the precipitous walls of the Valley he adores; there are shadows, also, where the imagery is vague—as imagery should be where overshadowed; there are heights dazzling with frost and sunshine; and over all is the fathomless and alluring sky, into which he soars like that aspiring soul of song that rests not this side the Gate of Heaven.

If he is sometimes obscure, it is because he has flown into cloud-land, where obscurity is a virtue; haunted by a memory of Yosemite, an occasional extravagance is surely permissible.

With the passionate enthusiasm of youth, this unspoiled poet has fluttered the eagles on their star-crowned peaks,

and I glory in the almost frenzied daring with which he has chanted *The Song of Songs which is Noguchi's!*

CHAS. WARREN STODDARD.

St. Anthony's Rest,
The Bungalow,
No. 300 M Street, N. W.,
Washington, D. C.

Song of Day in Yosemite Valley

Song of Day in Yosemite Valley

O THUNDEROUS opening of the
unseen gate of solemn Heaven's
Eternal Court!
Behold, clouds, tenants of the sky, sweep
down from the Heavens unto a se-
cret palace under the Earth!—
Aye, mighty Yosemite!—a glorious troop
of the unsuffering souls of gods
Marches on with battle-sound against the
unknown castle of Hell!—
Aye, a divine message of Heaven unto
Earth—the darksome house of mor-
tals—to awake!

Song of Day in Yosemite Valley

Hark—the heart-broken cry of a great Soul!—
Nay, the tempestuous song of Heaven's organ throbbing wild peace through the sky and land!
The Shout of Hell wedded to the Silence of Heaven completes the Valley concert, forms the true symphony—
The Female-light kissing the breast of the the Male-shadow chants the sacred Union!
I, a muse from the Orient, where is revealed the light of dawn,
Harken to the welcome strains of genii from the heart of the great Sierras—
I repose under the forest-boughs that invoke the Deity's hymn from the Nothing-air.

Song of Day in Yosemite Valley

Here, brother mortal, lies the path, like
Beauty's arm, guiding thee into the
Heaven afar!—
Alone I stray by the mountain walls that
support the enameled mirror-sky,
Enfolding my free-born soul in the vice-
purifying odors of the forest from an
unknown corner of Paradise.
Art thirsty?—here rolls the snow-robed
water for thy fulfillment;
Does dullness veil thee?—here a stone
chamber invites thee into the world
of dreams through an unseen door.
O return, brother mortal, from Samsara
unto the great Valley!
Yea, the mighty Temple of the World,
everlasting with the heaven and earth,
welcomes thee!

Song of Day in Yosemite Valley

Behold! Yosemite, sermoning Truth and
Liberty, battles in spirit with the
Pacific Ocean afar!
O unfading wonder, eternal glory! I pray
a redemption from the majesty that
chains me—
(Lo, Hell offers a great edifice unto
Heaven!) O, I bid my envy and
praise rest against thee;
I am content in the sounding Silence,
in the powerless Time that holds the
Valley in the age of gold;
I proffer my stainful body and leprous
soul with blackest shame unto
thee;
I am united with the Universe, and the
Universe with me.

Song of Day in Yosemite Valley

O hail, brother mortal! the true joy is
revealed unto thee —
Be thou a wave ebbing and flowing with
the air of Heaven!
Behold! The genii of the forest chant
Peace unto the Lord from an un-
known shrine in the Valley temple.
O mighty chapel of God! Thou know-
est not an iron chariot stained with
hostile blood; —
Aye, idle spears and foolish shields dare
not ruin thee, proclaiming War in
Eternity!

Song of Night in Yosemite Valley

Song of Night in Yosemite Valley

HARK! The prophecy-inciting
windquake of the unfathomable
concave of darkest Hell!
O, the God-scorning demon's shout
against the truth-locked gate of
mighty Heaven!
Heaven and Hell joining their palace and
dungeon, remould the sinful universe
to an ethereal paradise —
O, the sphere is shaken by the Master-
Mechanic working from the surface
of the world to its center!

Song of Night in Yosemite Valley

Alas, the sun has fled in saddest woe! —
O mortal, breathe thy silent prayer
unto mighty Yosemite for mirth!
Behold, the light of day leaves the white
mansion to the care of dolorous
night! —
The genii of the Valley fly from the roar
of a thousand lions to the sacred
peace above —
Lo, an unknown jeweler decks the black,
velvety heaven with treasure-stars —
Yea, the Mother-Goddess, mantling the
earth with the night, forbids Yosem-
ite disturb her baby-angel's dream in
the heaven!
Hark! the night disconcord of the eter-
nal falling of waters sounding dis-
content throughout the earth —

Song of Night in Yosemite Valley

O, a chariot is rushing down to an unknown hollow in wild triumph!
Behold, a dragon reveals divinity in the ghostly-odorous sky of night—
Nay, the mighty sword of the Judgment Day blazes down the Heaven to the gate of Hell!

In the Valley

In the Valley

THE Sierra-rock, a tavern for the
clouds, refuses to let Fame and
Gold sojourn.—
Down the Heaven by the river-road, an
angel's ethereal shadow strays.—
The Genii in the Valley-cavern consult in
silence the message of the Heavens.
O Lord, show unto mortals thy journal —
the balance of Glory and Decay!

The Night Reverie in the Forest

The Night Reverie in the Forest

"BUY my tears that I sucked from the breast of Truth—tears, sister spirits of Heaven's smile!" sobs the Wind.

Thou pale Wind, tear-vender of the hideous night, no one welcomes thee with thy unsold tears!

Thou Gipsy-Wind, my fellow-wanderer who fears light, cease thy plaintive strain of the sweet home ever lost!

"O Poet, sole midnight comforter, share my tears in thy heart ever tenanted by Autumn!"

The Night Reverie in the Forest

Kiss me, Wind, to whom the gates of
Spring never swing open, let us sleep
under the weeping candle-star!
O Repose, whose bosom harbors the
heavenly dream-ships, welcome me,
an exiled soul!
Thou Forest, where Peace and Liberty
divide their wealth with even a home-
less convict,
Let me sleep in thy arm-boughs, safer far
than a king's iron castle guarded by
mortal power!
Lull thy guest to reverie, master-spirit of
the forest, with thy solemn love-tales
of ancient gods!
Here Ease and Grandeur lodge in the
forest's heart, where Time ever
reveals his changeless youth.

The Night Reverie in the Forest

Five miles I traveled — the black-robed
bird-monk had ended his last prayer,
a good-night hymn;
Ten miles,— I lost the home window-
light that bids Sorrow and Tears
depart like masterless dogs;
Twenty miles,— the eloping mother-moon
had abandoned her child, my lonely
soul.
Thou Darkness, bewailing thy desertion
by Light, I deplore my like fate,
echoing thy saddest strain! —
Friend Night, my tears overflow from the
love-fountain unto the sorrow-made
dells!
I, an idle singer, fleeing from the world's
shame, make a pilgrimage to an un-
known land — O Heaven — or Hell?

The Night Reverie in the Forest

Thou Silence, who never responds to mortal's voice, where is the secret door of Paradise? — Speak once unto me!

O Star, thou radiant spirit of the blessed Beatrice who once guided a mortal unto Heaven, brighten now my darksome path!

I, a lone pilgrim, knock at the gate of Heaven — nay, the silent castle of Repose — O Repose!

Rhyme on, Lady-Rivulet from thy mountain Memnon, thy tunable song awakening mortals' vanity-dreams!

Ah, Nakedness! Nakedness — to whom Shame and Pride are buried in the peaceful tomb of Faith!

The Night Reverie in the Forest

Ah, Loneliness! Loneliness—to whom a
boatman of God is the sole savior
on the vast Sea of Eternity!
I repose under the forest's arm-boughs—
if I awaken not forever, pray, brother
mortal,
Make my grave under the greenest grass
and carve this line: "HERE SLEEPS
A NAMELESS POET."

The Song of Songs
which is Noguchi's

I Hail Myself as I do Homer

THE heart of God, the unpretending
heaven, concealing the midnight
stars in glassing the day of earth,
Showers his brooding love upon the green-
crowned goddess, May Earth, in
heart-lulling mirth.
O Poet, begin thy flight by singing of the
hidden soul in vaporous harmony;
Startle the lazy noon drowsing in the full-
flowing tide of the sunbeams nailing
thy chants in Eternity!
The melody breathing peace in the name
of Spring, calms tear to smile, envy
to rest.

I Hail Myself as I do Homer

Ah thou, world of this day, sigh not of
the poets who have deserted thee —
aye, I hail myself as I do Homer!
Behold, a baby flower hymns the cre-
ation of the universe in the breeze,
charming my soul as the lover-
moon!
O Yone,— a ripple of the vanity-water, a
raindrop from the vanity-cloud,—
lay thy body under the sun-enameled
shade of the trees
As a heathen idol in an untrodden path
awakening in spirit sent by the
unseen genius of the sphere!
The earth, a single-roomed hermitage
for mortals, shows not unto me a
door to Death on the joy-carpeted
floor —

I Hail Myself as I do Homer

Aye, I call the once dead light of day
from the dark-breasted slumber of
night!—
I repose in the harmonious difference of
the divine Sister and Brother,—Voice
and Silence in Time.
O Yone, return to Nature in the wood-
land,—thy home, where Wisdom
and Laughter entwine their arms!
Ah Cities, scorning the order of the world,
ye plunder rest from night, paint day
with snowy vice,—
Alas, the smoke-dragon obscures the light
of God; the sky-measuring steeple
speaks of discontent unto the Heaven!
O Yone, wander not city-ward—there
thou art sentenced to veil thy tears
with smiles!

I Hail Myself as I do Homer

Behold, the cloud hides the sins of the
cities — regiments of redwood-giants
guard the holy gates of the woodland
against the shames!
Chant of Nature, O Yone,— sing thy
destiny — hymn of darkness for the
ivory-browed dawn —
Behold, the deathless Deity blesses thee in
silence from the thousand temples
of the stars above!

Hymn of Summer

THIS is the month of gracious shade
of trees—dusky hair on the marble
ground-chest invoking mortals'
worship.
Here the composed wonder of the earth-
canvas is divided by the proud black
shade and virtuous white light.
Sing, Summer Muse, the abundant love
of the shade and light that overflows
from Time's grand breast!
Harken, Genii, to the light and shade—
gay prattle that is the despair of the
poet's soul!—

Hymn of Summer

The zealous breezes from the four corners
of the universe are pilgrims unto the
forest-shrine where I pray.
Confess, mortals, the deep-grounded sins
of thy memory-record unto the God
of the Woodland!
Ah, wonderful is the sacred remedy
ensainting mortals' self-love at the
forest-shrine!
Listen! The sorrowless birds rejoice at the
revealing of the Perfect Day; they
bend not their wishes unto titles and
gold.
Enter into Paradise, mortals,— the guar-
dian-birds of the hidden gate call thee!
Come, Goddess, whose maiden eye-doors
are enameled with the dethroned
stars of heaven —

Hymn of Summer

Come, Beauty, whose lips, portals to the love-mansion of her heart, are illumined with blood from flower cheeks,
Sing unto thy slave the song of the angel-land where thou and I hide from vile mortals!
Sing, Summer Muse, the everlasting greenness of trees that breathes the unwithering health of celestial youth!
I hail the beauteous abundance of the leaves that perfect their secret toilet with the sun's power!
Rise, Poet, sing of the fairy world that is not Time's mere fancy, where the olive of balmy age ever lives!
Thou, fearless mortals against Fate's tyranny, art the worthy partners of Heaven and Earth!

Hymn of Summer

Oh, this is the happy month of the ethereal water that destroys Death and Sorrow for mortals under the shade!
I repose in the shade-breezes from angels' gardens — I sing the summer song that the rivulet echoes down from afar!

Adieu

ADIEU, Sons and Daughters of the first pair of mortals!
Adieu, City — you know not of celestial joy rippling in tune with nature!
Adieu, Fame — a sunbeam following the darkness of night!
Adieu, Gold — glittering dust of the earth, valueless in the land of Heaven!
Adieu, Mansions — you wall the sky, hide the moon and the stars!
I love the unbroken peace of the country uniting the purple heaven with the green-carpeted earth below,—

Adieu

I love the saintly chant of the winds
touching their odorous fingers to the
harp of the angel, Spring,—
I love the undiscording sound of thou-
sands of birds, whose concord of
song echoes on the rivulet afar,—
I muse on the solemn mountain which
waits in sound content for the time
when the Lord calls forth,—
I roam with the wings of high-raised
fantasy in the pure universe,—
Oh, I chant of the garden of Adam and
Eve!
Behold! The night's shadow girding
round our half-sphere, the world
goes into reverie,—
Yea, my spirit in a dream rises afar to steal
the matchless pearls of eternal stars!

Adieu

Hark! the far-off fowl sings of the
divine morn of light! I hail the
glorious sun's ascent!
I chant again of the complete order of
the universe with the earth, with the
heaven above!

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The Voice of the Valley

Yone Noguchi